

REMARKS

The Office Action dated May 17, 2006, has been reviewed in detail along with all references made of record. Reconsideration of the claims of the instant application is respectfully requested in view of the following remarks.

Applicants would like to extend their appreciation to the Examiner for the time and attention accorded this case. As will be set forth in detail herebelow, the issues raised by the Office in the outstanding Office Action, when reconsidered in light of the foregoing amendments and the following comments, should be resolved in Applicants' favor.

As of the mailing date of the outstanding Office Action, Claims 3-5 and 7-26 were on file, with the Office clearly indicating that Claims 3, 5 and 7-26 are allowed. By this Amendment, Claim 4 has been cancelled without prejudice. Applicants reserve the right to pursue Claim 4, or to pursue other claim coverage, via one or more continuing applications under 35 U.S.C. 120.

The Office indicated that "applicant's arguments with respect to Claim 4 have been considered..". It is to be noted that the Amendment dated February 28, 2006, contained no "arguments" at all with respect to Claim 4. Instead, Applicants acknowledged that the Office considered Claim 4 to contain allowable subject matter and, per the suggestion of the Office,

rewrote Claim 4 in independent form.

Claim 4 now stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102 in view of McCann et al. In view of the cancellation of Claim 4 without prejudice, the present rejection is obviated. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the present rejection are hereby respectfully requested.

References Made of Record but not Applied:

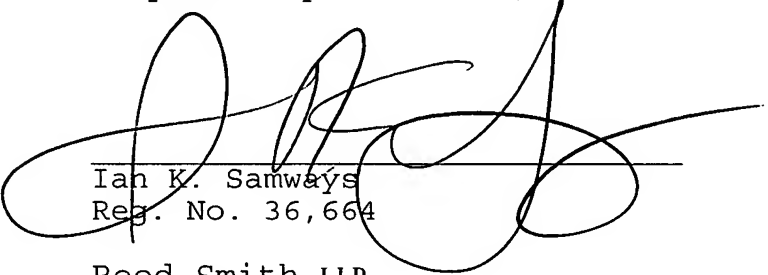
The references made of record but not applied against the claims have been reviewed. Applicants acknowledge that the Office has deemed such references not sufficiently relevant to have been relied upon in the outstanding Office Action. However, to the extent that the Office may apply such references against the claims in the future, Applicants are prepared to fully respond thereto.

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In summary, Applicants respectfully submit that the instant application, including Claims 3, 5 and 7-26, is presently in condition for allowance. Notice to the effect is hereby earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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Ian K. Samways
Reg. No. 36,664

Reed Smith LLP
P.O. Box 488
Pittsburgh, PA 15230
(412) 288-4160

Agent for Applicants